

The Bateson Report

How it affects Australia

The report

Around 12 months ago Emeritus Professor Sir Patrick Bateson FSE of Cambridge University commenced an inquiry into welfare and health issues relating to the breeding of dogs in the United Kingdom.

The Bateson Inquiry, commissioned and paid for by the Kennel Club and Dogs Trust, but completely independent, was one of several inquiries arising out of the BBC Program "Pedigree Dogs Exposed" two years ago and screened in Australia in September 2009.

The much awaited report calls for dramatic improvements in dog breeding activities in the UK, particularly in relation to the areas of health and welfare.

Comment

1) Although couched in moderate language the clear message is that Bateson found there is a major problem with dog breeding, health and welfare in the UK and that correcting the problem involves a wide range of participants.

2) What Bateson does not recommend is a mandate to the Kennel Club as the peak body for pedigreed dogs in England to take the lead role in correcting the problem.

3) Indeed, almost every Bateson recommendation involves legislation, control, involvement or oversight by parties that are not the Kennel Club.

4) Even the upgraded Kennel Club Accredited Breeder Scheme he recommends is subject to be "enforced" if the Kennel club does not get it right.

5) The Kennel club would not even have the final authority of its own breed standards. They could be subject to judicial oversight. That affects us because in Australia our UK imported breed standards would therefore ultimately be controlled by UK legislation.

6) The message to governing pedigreed dog organisations in Australia could not be clearer. Either we demonstrate that we can manage our own health and welfare affairs or we risk having them taken out of our hands and managed for us.

7) Demonstrating this involves self regulation and communicating with the public, the government and peak welfare bodies how much work that we, as responsible breeders, are doing on health and welfare as well as proactively embracing proper scientific testing and solutions as they become available.

8) Pedigreed dog governing bodies in Australia have, so far avoided the enormous publicity backlash suffered by the Kennel Club after the "Pedigreed Dogs Exposed" BBC program. This could change very quickly if we sit on our hands.

9) Governing bodies in this country can benefit from the Bateson report without all the legislation and oversight by looking at the how its advice can be utilized by us as responsible breeders.

10) We could implement the improved Accredited Breeder Scheme and support initiatives such as collection of "anonymised" disease incidence data from veterinary surgeries, public awareness programs for puppy buyers, and rewarding accredited breeders, to name a few.

11) Dogs NSW has followed the approach in 7) above for the last 2 years and has found that the level of reciprocal cooperation and response from government, peak welfare bodies and media has been very positive.

12) The ANKC efforts in this respect have also met with similar responses from peak welfare and educational bodies. Indeed the ANKC media program prior to last year's local screening of PDE and catalyst achieved positive results in avoiding the UK style backlash that the animal rights activists were hoping for.

Conclusion

The choice is ours. We can say it is all a plot, protest about our "rights" and complain endlessly to each other on internet chat lists or we can be realistic about where the world is heading, get constructively involved and control our own destiny.

FRANK PIETERSE President Dogs NSW 28.01.2010

MDBA Response to UK Enquiry into Dog Breeding

The Master Dog Breeders and Associates has welcomed Professor Sir Patrick Bateson's 'Independent Inquiry into Dog Breeding' in the UK, which has recommended that steps be taken to tackle irresponsible breeders and to change the way the public think about buying dogs.

Julie Nelson CEO of the MDDBA says "We believe that there is a danger in accepting that the issues facing the welfare of dogs is the same in Australia as it is in its entirety in the U.K. However, the MDDBA is happy that the report recognises the need for a 'robustly policed and well respected quality assurance scheme', consisting of breeders that buyers can trust to look after their puppies' health and welfare."

"The MDDBA felt this was needed and we have been setting a precedent in this area for over 6 years. We feel that our system of accepting members and keeping checks on them is doing exactly what this report calls for. In fact the suggested framework for the group set out in the report describes what the MDDBA does almost exactly. We are

independent and not associated with the Kennel Clubs and our members are rewarded for their focus on health and welfare issues over and above any other, though most of our Breeder members are also members of their state's Canine Associations." She said

"We welcome the principle of an advisory council whose members will work with breeders to advise on decisions about breeding and health. We feel that ALL breeders should be well represented by breeders within any group of this kind to ensure open communication, knowledge sharing, and the variables between breeder groups are taken into consideration to minimise the risks of an intended negative consequences. We need to ensure we move forward in preventing any dog from suffering due to poor breeding practices." Ms Nelson said

"We also very much welcome the acknowledgement that there needs to be evidenced based decisions made and a great need to develop methods and studies to collect data on prevalence and incidence of health and welfare related issues. The MDDBA survey on health issues where thousands of every day dog owners, breeders and canine rescue workers have logged their dog's diagnosed health issues is

The Bateson recommendations summarised

The recommendations of the Bateson Committee are summarised below. I apologise for including some legalese but please stay with me. From the "birds eye view" below leap some very obvious conclusions as to the problems the Kennel Club faces and where we must "read the writing on the wall" and act now.

The full text can be found at <http://breedinginquiry.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/final-dog-inquiry-120110.pdf>

The numbers below are the same as Bateson's

The recommendations come under 3 broad headings

a) Inbreeding and inherited disease and the selection for extreme morphologies.

b) Poor or negligent management and care of breeding dogs

c) Inadequacies in the way dogs are bought and sold

Some recommendations are relevant to more than one issue.

a) Addressing inbreeding and inherited disease and the selection for extreme morphologies

8.1) Recommendation. Establish an independent non Statutory Council on Dog Breeding to develop evidence based breeding strategies to address issues of poor conformation, inherited disease and inbreeding in relation to specific breeds and provide advice as to priorities for research and development.

8.2) Recommendation. Collect anonymised (sic) diagnosis from veterinary surgeons to provide statistically significant prevalence data for each Breed.

8.3) Recommendation. Revise breed Standards, involving guidance from the Advisory council, to avoid selection of extreme morphologies (interconnected components) and encourage selection of morphologies that improve the welfare status of the Breed. More precision in breed standards.

8.4) Recommendation. Kennel club to upgrade its Accredited Breeder Scheme to include,

a) pre-mating disease testing

b) no mating where tests indicate inadvisable,

c) prospective purchasers view puppies with mother,

d) puppies microchipped prior to sale,

e) presale health tests on puppies

f) strict standards of management for kennels

g) detailed information for puppy care and welfare to purchasers,

h) inspection of kennels by trained scheme inspectors

i) non compliance results in deregistration

j) accolades to accredited breeder under scheme based solely on high welfare standards

8.5) Recommendation. Accent to be on prevention rather than correction of problems

b) Addressing poor or negligent management and care of breeding dogs

8.6) Recommendation. Upgrade local authority powers to inspect licensed kennels. High standards of health, welfare, accommodation, socialisation, records and testing by these kennels.

8.7) Recommendation. All puppies microchipped before sale.

8.8) Recommendation. Increased Statutory health and welfare obligations for all breeders. Any body laying down Breed standards (inc Kennel Club) must, subject to judicial review, have regard to health and welfare and breed specified health problems. Offences created for breaches.

8.9) Recommendation. Statutory Code of Practice for breeding of Dogs covering all aspects of breeding, health, welfare, socialisation and sale. Enforced quality assurance to cover the Accredited Breeder Scheme.

8.10) Recommendation. Stronger legislation for licensing and supervision of breeders.

8.11) Recommendation. British Veterinary Association to provide lists of Vets who will inspect breeding premises.

c) Addressing inadequacies in the way dogs are bought and sold.

8.12) Recommendation. A public awareness campaign to educate public about what to look for when buying a dog.

8.13) Public recommendation to buy dogs from accredited breeders.

8.14) Combine recommendations of AGPAW (Associate Parliamentary Group for Animal Welfare). Report with Bateson recommendations where they overlap.

Frank Pieterse

clearly showing that there may be a vast difference between that which has been stated in the media as incidence in Australian bred dogs and those which in fact are. This is most definitely an area which needs to be addressed" she said

"Its also disappointing that the brief for the report was about the health and welfare of pedigreed purebred dogs, and that more focus was not able to be placed on problems, methods and possible solutions to address issues relating to how small casual breeders and large commercial breeders could be held more accountable, better educated and regulated. This is especially important considering that pedigreed purebred breeders in Australia only breed about 3% of the puppies sold each year."

"There are many Breeders who are breeding purebred and cross bred dogs in appalling conditions, with no health checks and little regard for more than making a profit and who will carry on regardless that this report doesn't go anywhere near addressing." She said.

Further information can be obtained from the MDDBA website at <http://www.mdba.net.au> or by phoning (02) 6927-6707.